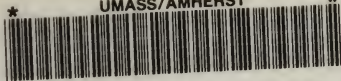


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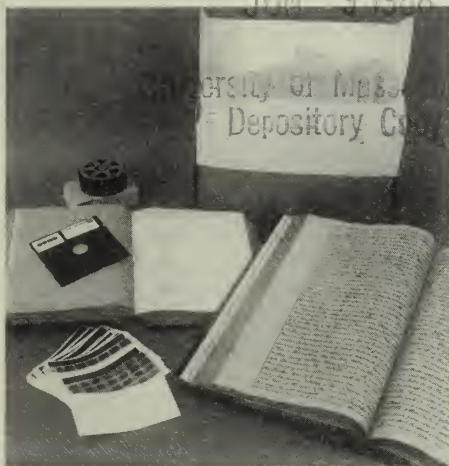
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SUPREME JUDICIAL COURT

ARCHIVES

AND

RECORDS

PRESERVATION



SUPREME JUDICIAL COURT ARCHIVES AND RECORDS PRESERVATION

The division of Archives and Records Preservation of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court works to locate, identify, preserve, and prepare for scholarly use historically important Massachusetts court records. To this end, the staff designs and implements archival and conservation programs for all of the Massachusetts courts.

The Massachusetts judicial system dates from the founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630, and its records form an unbroken series since that time. The records provide an unparalleled source of legal, social, economic, political, and cultural history, particularly for the 17th and 18th centuries, for which contemporary data is sparse.

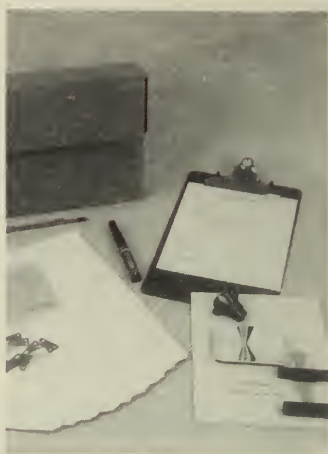
While the records are sprinkled with names of historically significant persons, such as John Adams, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, they also document the lives of countless individuals who may have left no other permanent record. Depositions, accounts, inventories, and other evidentiary documents provide a wealth of detail about technological and material culture and everyday life. The aesthetics of many of the early documents—handwritten on handmade paper with unique watermarks, seals, engravings—makes many of them historic artifacts in their own right.

In addition to providing information about individual persons and events, the records are useful for quantitative studies and the tracking of historical movements. A source of verified facts, they can also be used to check the authenticity of other sources. Opening these records to broad public use for the first time will lead to new ways of understanding the past.

For over three and a half centuries these records have accumulated in courthouses across the Commonwealth. In response to the growing concern of court clerks and scholars about the condition of the records, Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court Chief Justice Edward F. Hennessey established the Judicial Records Committee in 1976 to study the problems of storage, access and disposition and to formulate a uniform statewide policy of preservation and enlightened records management.

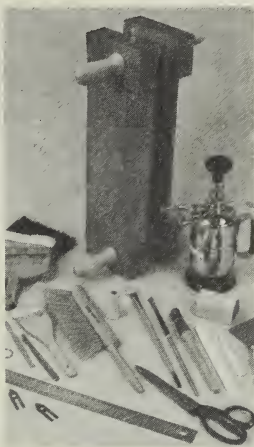
Several federal grants underlined the need for a long-term, coordinated program to effectively address the care and maintenance of court records. In 1981 the Supreme Judicial Court made that permanent commitment by establishing the division of Archives and Records Preservation. The mandate of the office was not only the treatment of specific early collections but also an advisory role for the care of all court records.

The division of Archives and Records Preservation consists of a professional staff of archivists and paper conservators. This core staff is supplemented by work-study students, interns, volunteers, and temporary employees.



ARCHIVES

The archival staff works with court administrators and personnel in the Supreme Judicial Court and the Office of the Chief Administrative Justice of the Trial Court to establish long term policies for the protection and care of all judicial records regardless of the court of origin or the date the records were created. On-going surveys, inventories and discussion with court personnel in the appellate and trial courts enable the archivists to identify records of permanent historical and archival value. In cooperation with the conservation staff, they establish priorities for future archival and conservation efforts. These efforts range from general recommendations for records retention and microreproduction policies to the description of discrete series of records for historical research. The archivists help clerks of court, registers of probate, and the recorder of the Land Court to locate, identify, arrange, and describe records so that the records are more accessible to court personnel and members of the general public.



CONSERVATION

The conservation section began its work in 1981 by focusing on the conservation of individual collections of court papers. Since that time the priorities have expanded to include responsibility for the preservation of all archival Massachusetts court records. Full conservation treatment, including dry cleaning, aqueous washing, deacidification, repair, lining, and mylar encapsulation is carried out on designated pre-1860 court records, by a staff of qualified and trained conservators. In addition, the conservation section is equipped to handle book repair and rebinding, and the preparation of both custom made and standardized enclosures and boxes.

The conservation staff is committed to preventative conservation procedures for both older and modern court records, urging the adoption and implementation of acid-free storage enclosures, proper methods of housing and handling, environmental control, and disaster contingency planning.

SUPREME JUDICIAL COURT
ARCHIVES AND RECORDS PRESERVATION



A
RESEARCH
GUIDE
TO
THE MASSA-
CHUSETTS
COURTS
AND
THEIR RECORDS



CATHERINE S. MENAND

*The GUIDE has been published with the
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to facilitate research in Massachusetts
court records.*

*To obtain copies, contact the Director,
Archives and Records Preservation,
Supreme Judicial Court,
1600 New Court House,
Boston, Massachusetts 02108.*

Archives and Records Preservation
welcomes qualified interns, work study
students, or volunteers who are
seriously interested in gaining experience
in archives and paper conservation.



Scholars, genealogists or members
of the general public interested in
using court records may contact:

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